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An Address Delivered to the
Colored People

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AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED TO THE

COLORED PEOPLE,

BY THEIR REQUEST,

AT THE WILMINGTON THEATRE,

JULY 26th, 1865,

BY ALFRED M. WADDELL.

WILMINGTON, N. C.:

PRINTED AT THE DAILY WILMINGTON HERALD OFFICE.

1865.

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tant political question. To-day, I said, on a copy of a speech made by me to the negroes here on the 26th of July last, while the cannon was still simmering. These opinions are considered very liberal even by some of your own party, and possibly they may obtain after awhile, but I am as much opposed to universal negro suffrage, as I feel the impossibility of negro equality as much as any man.

The *animus* of the Southern people seems to be an element in the reconstruction plan of Congress. It is not unnatural that we should desire to know what your *animus* toward us is. Are you determined to force perfect negro equality upon us when you do not recognize it at home? The Legislature of North Carolina gives them every right which the whites have, except the right to vote and sit on a jury. Individually, I do not object to a qualified suffrage for all, but the vast majority are against it bitterly. Do you think it absolutely necessary to the welfare of the Government to force perfect equality upon the people against their wishes? I say nothing about Constitutional objections. That is a matter of law, this of feeling—which, as a statesman, you cannot defend. I see by questions put to Gen. Lee (God bless him) that the social ostracism practiced towards U. S. officers is lodged in the account against us. What has that to do with our equality? Is it not both natural and creditable in us at present? Some of the officers of the Freedmen's Bureau are deadly enemies of our people, and are doing more to produce disaffection than any class of men among us. They write and publish at the North, most villainous slanders concerning us, and still they expect social courtesies from us. If the South had overrun the North, would Confederate officers in gray uniforms have been welcomed into the bosoms of your families while they occupied your houses and haunted your people?

Since the fortunes of war have decided that but one Government should exist in the territory between Canada and Mexico, I am irresistibly desirous to see that Government established upon perpetual foundations. As it affects the peace and protection, I shall be as faithful to the Union, and strive to discharge my duties as I can upon my part, and I believe this is the only way. We wish to cultivate amicable relations with all our neighbors, but our loyalty is to be tested, not by the selfishness of which we discharge our obligation, but by the personal affection for our country. As not stated in my paper. As I am loyal to the Union, I am loyal to the country. I am and always will be.

Wm. D. KELLEY.

AN ADDRESS

TO THE COLORED PEOPLE.

BY THEIR REQUEST,

AT THE WILMINGTON THEATRE.

1865.

For patriotic purposes, our different would be easy of solution. With

Yours, very truly,
WM. D. KELLEY.

This address, which is published at the request of a few friends, was delivered on the 26th of July, while the feelings and prejudices of persons, arising out of the war had abated but little of their intensity. By delivering it I certainly could not render myself obnoxious to the charge of seeking popularity. Publishing it will not render me more so.

If it is simple in its ideas and language, the audience before whom it was delivered will furnish any apology which may be due on that score.

A. M. WADDELL.

SEPTEMBER 6TH, 1865.

Mr. WADDELL said:

I am here, my friends, at your request, to speak freely with you, to make known to you exactly your situation as members of the community, and to give you my best advice in regard to your new duties and responsibilities. I have not come to flatter you, nor to discourage you. I have accepted your invitation in that spirit which should influence every good citizen and true friend of your race, when called upon to do you a service. It would have been very easy, and it might have been very politic in me to decline it; but, while seeking no public favors, I have never dodged any public responsibility, and as I believed some good might be accomplished by accepting the invitation, I did not hesitate about it. I cannot feel otherwise than deeply gratified, too, at this evidence of your confidence in me, and I shall certainly always endeavor to justify it.

The worthy and well-disposed among you are entitled to the sympathy and encouragement of all good people. I believe that you will receive it; and here let me say, at the outset, that it is unjust and a mistake to suppose that the white people among whom you were born and raised, with whom you played when you were children, and served as you grew up, have all at once turned to be your enemies, because those of you who were formerly slaves have suddenly been set free. Sudden reverses of fortune are apt to embitter and depress men, it is true, and it requires more philosophy than most of us possess to submit uncomplainingly to loss of property—but the white people know that *you* are not responsible for their loss. On the contrary, they know that you have simply accepted the freedom which has been given to you. They do not hate you—they are not your enemies. Bad men have been among you and taught you otherwise, perhaps, but what do such teachers know about the matter? What are their motives? Is it because they love you so much, or because they hate some other persons so intensely? Will their teachings do any good? Is it calculated to make two persons live happily and harmoniously together, to be secretly telling one of them all the time that the other is his enemy and wishes to destroy him? Oh no, my friends, such teachers as these are laying a snare for you, unconsciously perhaps, but a snare, nevertheless. *They* are your worst enemies, because they advise you to a course which can result in nothing but injury to yourselves. As far as my observation extends, the white people, with rare exceptions, are disposed to help those of you who are industrious and well-disposed, in every way possible.

Now let us look at the situation of affairs here in North Carolina and throughout the South. What is it?

The institution of slavery, which has existed among us for a much longer time than the constitution of the United States—which was established and encouraged in the South by old England and new England, contrary, in some instances, to the wishes of the Southern people, and particularly contrary to the wishes of the people of North Carolina, before there was any such government as the United States.

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and afterwards was sustained by the United States government as a lawful institution—this institution, I say, has been destroyed by the terrible civil war which has devastated this country for the past four years. It no longer exists. There are now no slaves in the United States. God has so ordered it, and to His will it is our duty at all times to say amen. The people of North Carolina, except a few obstinate and impracticable men, who cannot and will not realize facts which they do not like, accept this fact of the destruction of slavery as settled and determined, practically, if not legally; and the people of North Carolina, in the convention which will soon be held, will vote almost, if not quite, unanimously in acknowledgment of this fact. Our people know that slavery was staked on the issue of the war, and having failed to sustain it with the sword they are perfectly well aware that it cannot be continued. Like sensible and honorable men, who have been fairly vanquished in a war of unequalled magnitude, they acknowledge the fact and accept the consequences. They intend, too, to make the best of the matter, and thousands now think that their prospects are fairer than they ever were in the days of slavery.

With this great change in your condition and relations towards the white race, come new duties and responsibilities for both races. The old state of things has passed away, and we, all of us, white and black, must adapt ourselves to the new circumstances; but in order to do so we must understand the circumstances.

You have rights now which you did not have before, but the white people, as a class, have not lost any of their rights, except the right to hold slaves. A very few of them are denied privileges which they once enjoyed, but that is a matter between them and the government, with which you have nothing whatever to do. I understand that some ignorant and misguided colored people, more particularly in the country, are under the impression that they are not only free, but that the property of their former owners will be taken away and given to them. Of course this is a cruel mistake, and most of you know better than to be misled by such an extravagant idea. The government has emancipated those of you who were slaves. It has freed you from bondage, and made null and void the laws which were peculiarly applicable to your former condition. It protects you in your personal liberty. It gives you the right to acquire and hold property, and to have the benefit of your own labor; to educate yourselves and your children; to worship God in your own way and under ministers of your own choice, and to seek your own happiness, subject only to the laws of the country. But, up to this time, it has done nothing more, and the prevailing opinion seems to be that it can legally do nothing more. If North Carolina was fully restored to her position and all her rights as a State of the Union under the constitution, it is very certain that the government could not, contrary to the State laws, confer any other political rights upon individuals than such as I have enumerated. The constitution of the United States leaves such questions as, who shall vote, or who shall sit on a jury, or be a witness in the civil courts of a State, to the determination of the States respectively—each one for itself. The government cannot dictate to Massachusetts or Ohio who shall vote there, or what the ques-

a juror or a witness shall be. The *citizens* of each State have exclusive control of such matters, and, therefore, if North Carolina is recognized now as a State having the same constitutional rights as any other State, the question whether you will be allowed to vote, sit on juries, &c., &c., is not for the government, but for the *citizens* of North Carolina to determine. What the exact position of North Carolina towards the general government is, I confess my inability to inform you.

Being a new question in the politics of this country, it remains to be settled by the proper authorities. One thing is certain, viz: That you cannot vote *now*, under the regulations established by the President for the reorganization of the State government. The people of North Carolina, in the convention which will soon assemble, may pass a law prohibiting any *white* man from voting unless he can read and write, or unless he owns a certain quantity of land or other property, or unless he has or does some other thing. Free colored men voted in North Carolina until the year 1835—then they were prohibited; and during all that time, when they were allowed to vote, there were thousands of white men in the State who could not vote for a member of the State Senate. No one, white or colored, could vote for senator unless he owned fifty acres of land six months before the election. Some colored men owned that much land and voted, while thousands of white men did not own that much and could not vote. This law requiring a voter for senator to own fifty acres was not altered until about eleven years ago. So you see if there is any hardship in being denied the right of suffrage, it is a hardship which white men have had to submit to as well as colored men. Colored men are not allowed to vote in some of those very Northern States where their best friends are supposed to reside, and in every State where they do vote they are obliged either to be able to read and write, or own a certain amount of property, or both. It comes with very bad grace, therefore, from persons from those States to insist upon others doing for the colored man what they will not do for him themselves. The colored men at the North are comparatively very few in number, too, and, as a class, have enjoyed better opportunities of education and improvement than most of you, and, therefore, are better qualified to vote understandingly, although their vote is a mere "drop in the bucket" after all.

Many persons think that there should be a qualification of *all* voters—that is to say, *no* man should vote unless he is qualified by education, or an interest in the soil, or the like, to vote understandingly, and such is my opinion. The right to vote for one's rulers is a great privilege, enjoyed only by a free people, but it is a privilege which is greatly abused. I look upon universal, unrestricted free suffrage as a curse instead of a blessing, and I think experience has proved the correctness of my opinion.

I believe the true and just rule to be to adopt a standard of qualification for voters of some kind, either of intelligence or property, or both, and to allow every man who can attain that standard to vote, whether he be white, black, green, yellow, red or any other color, and to prohibit any from voting who cannot attain that standard. This is my honest and candid opinion, and I utter it without fear or the

hope of reward; but as I came here to tell you "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," I must add that I do not believe that a majority of my fellow-citizens think and feel as I do on this subject, though I believe the time will come when my views will prevail in North Carolina. I believe that there are some colored men in this hall who could vote now with quite as intelligent a conception of what they were doing as many white men; but I believe, also, that a large majority of the colored people are not yet qualified to exercise this privilege. They have no acquaintance with politics—they cannot understand fully the questions which their votes would help to decide—and consequently they would be mere tools in the hands of demagogues. Time would remedy all this, and the number of colored voters in proportion to population would increase with the spread of education among you. Every man would strive to educate his children and fit them for the duties of a citizen, and with this stimulus before you, the elevation of your race in the scale of humanity would be rapid and sure. I speak this much upon the subject of suffrage because I am informed that it is a subject which occupies much of your thoughts, and about which you feel great anxiety. The right to vote is all that stands between you and the title of "American citizen." Whether that right will be extended to you or not I cannot tell. I have already expressed my willingness to see those of you vote who can reach the common standard which I think should be erected for all citizens, but I have also stated that I am in advance of the public opinion in North Carolina.

One thing, however, I think all ought to agree to, and that is, that if you cannot vote you ought not to be taxed, and this act of justice will, at least, I believe, be performed towards you, especially as your presence among us will give us more representatives in Congress than we ever had there. Each State is entitled to one representative in Congress for every ninety thousand inhabitants, and under the old system three-fifths of all the slaves were counted. Now there being no slaves, and all being free, all will be counted, making the number two-fifths greater, and thus giving North Carolina one or two more members of Congress. To free you from taxes in case you are not allowed to vote, will be little enough to compensate for this advantage to us.

But I wish you never to lose sight of one thing, my friends, and that is, that while you would doubtless rejoice at a law allowing you to vote, you are bound to obey the law if it should be otherwise. Recollect that a large majority of the people of North Carolina are whites, and that, therefore, whether you vote or not, they will always control the State; they will control it by a majority if you do vote. The majority must govern. The United States government asserted and maintained that doctrine in the war which has just closed. It will continue to assert and maintain that doctrine, and you cannot resist it without inviting destruction upon yourselves. Let the present condition of these Southern States be a warning to all who would undertake to defy the authority and power of the United States over all its territory. It is now one of the most powerful governments, if not the most powerful, on earth. It has given you all the freedom

you enjoy, and it would be very unwise to incur its displeasure, and bring down its wrath upon your heads.

Now let us drop the matter of suffrage, and turn to something still more closely affecting you, as it concerns the means of obtaining your daily bread, and touches your every day life. You have heretofore constituted principally the laboring population of the South.

You will, hereafter, necessarily be laborers, but you will not be the only laborers. The institution of slavery was all that kept foreign immigration from our shores. The tide of foreigners set to the North and West, where they could buy good lands very cheap, live in a free State, and give their children the best advantages of education. A very large proportion of these are the most laborious and thrifty people in the world. They have no stumps in their fields, no unpainted, dilapidated buildings, nor broken down fences on their land. Their farms are like garden-patches, and under the influence of their intelligent industry, the wilderness blossoms as the rose. They improve and enrich any country they may inhabit. Now, since the abolition of slavery has removed the only obstacle in the way, these thrifty, intelligent people are coming out to the South. The climate, the soil, and the certainty of prosperity, invite them to our land. The tide will soon turn in this direction, and when they come with their intelligence, stout hearts and sturdy arms to settle among us, you will have to bestir yourselves, or be left far behind in the race. Lazy, thriftless people, white or black, will inevitably be elbowed out of the way, to make room for the industrious, the active and the enterprising.

The land will be a bee-hive, and the drones will perish. There is every inducement for you to become enlightened, upright and industrious members of the community. Every consideration of self-interest impels you to it.

With your new rights you have responsibilities which were not imposed upon you before. The marriage relation, which in the days of slavery had no legal force, is now equally as binding upon you as upon the whites. The law will compel you to observe the duties incident to this relation, and for any violation of them you will be punished as white people are punished. The loose ideas which have prevailed among you on this subject must cease. You will have to support and take care of your families. You cannot abandon them at your pleasure. The aged and infirm, who were formerly a charge upon their owners, now fall to your care. You will have to support them. You had no inducements when you were slaves to be economical and saving, and consequently you were careless about money, and contracted habits of extravagance. These habits will have to be abandoned now, and more particularly because your wages cannot reasonably be expected to be very high. The white people of the South are greatly reduced in circumstances. The war which effected your freedom has destroyed the wealth of the country. The capital invested in slaves alone amounted to about two thousand five hundred millions of dollars. This, for one item, is gone. They have lost as much more in various ways. Your freedom was obtained at a tremendous sacrifice of blood and treasure, and this poverty of the country in which you necessarily share is a part of the price you have to pay for it.

You ought to establish schools for the education of your children, and lay up money for a rainy day. You ought to devote all the energies of your nature to the task of elevating your race. You ought to do all you can to show to the world that you deserve and can maintain the freedom and the privileges which have been bestowed upon you. In these efforts every good man will bid you God-speed, and before them every prejudice of those who look upon you with distrust will melt away. But let me tell you that in order to succeed in these efforts you will have to prove yourselves an exception to every instance of emancipation which has ever happened in the history of your race.

The faith of many people in the idea of emancipation has been greatly shaken by the experience of other countries. In some of the West Indies, through the extraordinary exertions of some humane and philanthropic men, the colored people who were emancipated about a half century ago, after a long night of degeneracy and degradation, are beginning to advance in the career of civilization; but in St. Domingo and Jamaica they have relapsed into a state of barbarism, and, in an instance related to me a few days ago, by an eye-witness, as having occurred about the first of the present year, twenty or more of the inhabitants were condemned to death for eating human flesh. The great advantage which your race enjoys here is contact and daily association with the white race. Their influence upon you, as far as civilization is concerned, must be beneficial, and, therefore, you ought to cultivate the friendship and good-will of the white people, and not to array yourselves in feeling against them. By doing the latter you have everything to lose and nothing to gain. The power which is placed in the hands of the majority of the people will not be used for your benefit, if you undertake to ignore and disregard that majority. Do not strike too high. Ambition, within decent limits is very commendable, but it is wise to remember that "by that sin fell the angels." If you make a mistake in this direction it may set you back instead of helping you forward.

As far as human agency is concerned in the management of human affairs, intelligence and wealth are the controlling influences. They are bound to govern. In our country wealth is the result of intelligence and industry, and it is shorn of none of its power here. You are, as I said just now, the laboring population of the country. Intelligence and industry may, and doubtless will, transform some of you into the class of capitalists—but these are the only means by which you can reach that end. Here then lies the path on which you should travel. Seek knowledge—be industrious—work. Lead quiet and orderly lives, and obey the laws, and you will prosper. Disregard these injunctions, and fifty years from to-day your race in these States will be nearly extinct.

These are some of your duties and responsibilities in the new situation in which you are placed. The white people have their duties and responsibilities also, and I hope and believe they will endeavor to perform them. We—the two races—occupy the same land; we are dwelling together, under one government. It seems to be the will of Providence that for some time at least, if not for all time, the two

civilizations should exist side by side, though in some respects they will always be separate and distinct. We cannot desire to see you degenerate into a condition of degradation, idleness and vice. Constituting so large a portion of the community, the interests of all would be affected by such a condition of things. The teachings of our religion, and of humanity, as well as our hopes of prosperity forbid it. It is our duty and it is our interest to aid you in the elevation and improvement of your race, and this aid, if you prove yourselves worthy of it, you will receive. You cannot expect everything to be accomplished for you in a day. The improvement of your condition must be the work of time. Your simple freedom is the result of many years' agitation of the slavery question, winding up with four long years of terrible, bloody war. If you are only true to yourselves now and in the future you have everything to hope from the generosity and justice of the white people. I wish to impress upon you the fact that they are disposed to be friendly towards those of you who show the right spirit, and only towards those. And I wish to impress this upon you for your own sakes particularly, and not for theirs, for I am well satisfied that the question of the two races living harmoniously and prosperously together, rests entirely with you for determination. I most sincerely believe, that some, a great many, of the truest and best friends, the most disinterested friends you have in this world, are to be found right here amongst former slaveholders. Many of the most intelligent among you know this very well, and acknowledge it, and act upon it. Continue to believe it and act upon it and you will not be betrayed. Justice requires me to say that I think you have received your freedom, generally speaking, with a spirit worthy of praise.

Some colored people have a very imperfect and incorrect idea of the freedom which has been given to them, it is true, but this was to be expected and was not unnatural. They ought, however, to be put right in the matter, and it is the duty of the influential—the leaders—among you to see to this thing. You ought to make them understand that freedom does not mean the right to do as they please without regard to other people; that it does not give them the right to injure, to insult or annoy other people, white or black, or to lounge about in idleness—this is the freedom of savages. The educated few among you will have most influence in shaping the destiny of your race, and therefore the responsibilities of your station are very great. I hope you appreciate them and will act accordingly.

I have only one or two other topics upon which to advise you and then my task will be finished. It is not to the interest of the colored people to crowd into the cities and towns in too great numbers. What they all as a class want now is good, steady employment, at fair wages, on the farms, turpentine lands, timber swamps, mines, railroads, navigable streams, &c., &c., of the country. Their first duty to themselves and their families is to provide the means of subsistence for the present, and, if possible, to secure situations which will enable them to "lay aside something for a rainy day." They ought to make it a chief object to save enough to buy a little land as soon as possible, and, when bought, to settle on it immediately and cultivate it diligently. Only a few of you are what are called skilled laborers, and these few will find the

competition with skilled white labor greater than they ever experienced before. A new era has dawned for you, to be sure, but a new era has also dawned for the country. This good old state of North Carolina, God bless her, is wide awake now, if she never was before, and her future is as bright as that of any state in the union. She has resources of which the world is profoundly ignorant, and which when developed will make her the richest state in the south. She is about starting on a career of prosperity heretofore unknown—a prosperity which will shed its blessings upon all her children of whatever color or race, who seek to benefit thereby. I would encourage you, my friends, to entitle yourselves to a participation in this prosperity. I would urge you as a friend who desires to see you enjoy all the happiness, and good fortune to which you can justly lay claim, to seek employment, to labor diligently to improve your condition and elevate your race, to abide faithfully by the laws, to educate your children and to live in such a way as to command the respect and sympathy of your fellow-men. You must not judge the future by the present. Everything is in an unsettled condition now. Military authority necessarily prevails until the civil authority can be fully established, society is demoralized, and evils are common. But this will not last long. The machinery of civil government will soon be put in motion. Elections will be held, the courts will be open for the punishment of crime, and the dispensation of justice, and law and order will once again be fully restored to this recently afflicted land. God speed the day, and may He who rules the destinies of all send us permanent peace and happiness and prosperity.

CARD FROM A. M. WADDELL, Esq.

August 31, 1865.

To the Editor of The Wilmington Herald:

SIR: In your morning edition of to-day you are pleased to allude to the "Lecture" delivered by me to the colored people, at their request a few weeks since, and in your comments upon that portion of it regarding suffrage, while courteously placing my argument on "honorable grounds," you do me injustice in your inferences. I have nothing to *explain away*, be it understood, and nothing to modify. I am perfectly willing to abide by the opinions expressed by me in that address. I distinctly stated that I believed a majority of my fellow-citizens disagreed with me; but as I had no political favors to ask of them, and entertained the convictions uttered, I saw no reason why I should not give expression to them. The present is certainly not a time to avoid responsibility, or dissemble one's true sentiments.

For some reason the colored people selected me as one in whom they had confidence to explain to them their situation, their rights and their duties. I did so candidly and truthfully. Upon the subject of suffrage about which the more intelligent of them were, and are, greatly exercised, I stated the law and the President's policy of rehabilitation, and intimated very plainly to them that there was little probability of a change in their favor; but I also gave my individual opinion on the question which was, and is, that universal suffrage is a curse and a humbug—that a qualification of some kind ought to be adopted for all voters, and that every man who attains that qualification ought to be allowed to vote, and all others ought to be excluded regardless of every other consideration. This would of course embrace colored men who are qualified. You are therefore correct in saying that I would not be opposed to extending the right of suffrage to colored men on certain conditions. But the *inference* which you draw from this, and which you state as a fact, viz: that I believe in the equality of the white and black races is a *non sequitur* and is wrong. So far from believing thus it is partially for the very reason that there is no such equality that I favor the regulation of suffrage as above stated. If the equality existed nobody would be opposed to the extension of the right of suffrage to the colored race. But its existence is not necessary to the solution of this question. The term "equality of the races" is commonly used without conveying a very definite idea of its meaning. What does it mean? Taken as a whole race I suppose there is no one who would say that the African is intellectually, morally, or numerically equal to the Caucasian race. Taken individually I suppose there is no one who would say that an African who had exactly the same amount of intellect and culture mentally and morally as an individual white man was not his equal in the measure-

ment of manhood. As to social equality it is only necessary to say that such a thing does not exist even amongst people of the same race in any part of the world. It is not a question of physiology or ethics. It is simply a question of statesmanship whether, under a government all whose powers are in the hands of the people, and where all are free and equally protected in their persons and property, a discrimination should be made in regard to citizenship against persons solely because they are of a particular race. The Siamese Twins are entitled to a vote in North Carolina, and I think they have exercised the right for some years. Do you think the inhabitants of Siam are our "equals?" You and I think that the Anglo-Saxon is the highest human development. Ought that to exclude people of every other race from the ballot box? "The equality of the races" under our institutions has nothing to do with the question of political power. That power according to a fundamental principle with us is "vested in and derived from *the people*." During the existence of slavery, from the very necessity of things, the colored race was not regarded as a part of "the people." The war has wrought a great transformation in this as in many other respects in our government. I am striving to appreciate this change in all its aspects—to take in *fully* the whole situation. It seems to me that by excluding *every* colored man from the polls now and for the future we stultify ourselves and pronounce a bitter satire upon our "free institutions."

I have endeavored briefly to point out the *principle* which governs my opinions on this subject, but have said nothing about the *policy* of adopting them. The latter seems to me to be as expedient as the former is just. I know of nothing which will so certainly remove the most bitter cause of dissension from our politics as the adoption of a qualified suffrage applicable to *all*. It is certainly most desirable to remove the subject out of the political arena, and I can see no injury likely to arise to the people of North Carolina by removing it in this way. My opinions are those of a man born and reared in the south, formerly the owner of a few slaves, and having perhaps as much of what is called the "prejudice of color" as others under like circumstances. Those circumstances were as likely to strengthen that prejudice as any which ever surrounded others who, like yourself, were reared in a different part of the country. But prejudice is not, I believe, the chief quality of a statesman, and ought not to control or be a chief element in the decision of great political questions.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

A. M. WADDELL.

